

Tributes to Būṭrūs Al-Bustānī

(Chronological Order)

I am oppressed to stand here today and to be engaged to a place that I do not desire. What suits me is your crying so I can mourn for my brother and my beloved who was kidnapped from us. My teacher and my companion, how many nights, we spent together studying, reading, writing... For the purposes is not to stand over his body as an orator, but rather knee beside him sad gloomy.

Forty-three years ago, he came to our city as a famous student from a famous school. He mastered Arabic, Syriac, and Latin; and he spoke Italian. He also studied Hebrew and Greek, all in love with knowledge and a desire to acquire the English language. All of this baggage helped him to benefit the people of his country. He started to teach and write, not as compulsory work, but for the desire and for being fond of his work...

Cornelius Van Dyck,

The Circle of Knowledge, Dār Al-Maʿrifah, Beirut, Vol. 7, [n. d.], pp. 593-594.

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The history of the early European encyclopedias shows that they were equivalent to one fourth of *The Circle of Knowledge* [by Buṭrus Al-Bustānī] due to its solid language structure, rich material, and well editorial work, together with the attractive layout, printing design, and illustrations... He was a great man in all his literary and linguistic works.

Philip De Tarrazi,

Tārīkh Aṣ-Ṣaḥāfah Al-‘Arabiyyah, Al-Maṭba‘ah Al-‘Adabiyyah, Beirut, 1913, Vol. I, p. 91.

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BuṭrusAl-Bustānī was intellectually one of the most prolific and most productive of the Lebanese during his time. Among other literary and scientific books he worked out and published the dictionaries *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* and *Qatr al- Muḥīṭ*. Also he worked and published the encyclopedia *The Circle of Knowledge*. These are giant language and intellectual compendiums and still considered as references till today...

Philip Hitti,

Lebanon in History, translated by Dr. Anīs Frayḥah, Franklin Institute for Printing and Publication, Beirut – New York, 1959, pp. 561-562.

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Al-Bustānī focused on the idea that the Near East, in order to develop and rise, needs to get introduced to the modern European thought. Yet he did not believe on just copying other civilizations without the spirit of criticism and analysis...

Albert Hourani,

Arab Thought in the Age of Renaissance, 1798-1939, Dār An-Nahār, 4th edition, Beirut, 1986, pp. 127-128.

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Al-Mu‘allim Buṭrus [Al-Bustānī] skillfully blends the social and the subjective, the external and internal needs and requirements for cultural regeneration and for being an autonomous subject. His criteria for the accumulation and circulation of knowledge, and therefore progress itself, range from the material (books and

technology) to the intellectual (motivations) to the cultural (travel) and to the social (freedom of thought). This weave demonstrates the dialectic nature of *Khūṭbah*'s criteria for a diagnosis of and prescription for what reformers would identify as the inherent ills of nineteenth-century Arab society.

Stephen Sheehi, Ph.D.

Foundations of Modern Arab Identity, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 2004, p. 22.

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